Political Protests, PLSC S410
Summer 2020, Session A
TTh 9am-12:15pm

Location: [RKZ 005]
This version 15/03/2020.

[Please, note this syllabus might be subject to changes due to the COVID-19 crisis]

CONTACT DETAILS
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OVERVIEW
Extinction Rebellion, the Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Protests, the October Rebellion in Chile, the #MeToo Moment, Black Lives Matter, the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, the Indignados Movement in Spain and Occupy Wall Street are only a few examples of well-known political protests and protest movements that occurred over the past decade. The Guardian defined the 2010s as the “decade of protest”, and 2019 capped this decade with an upsurge of protests all over the world.

What are the roots of these protests? Under what conditions does protest start? Why people decide to join a protest? Under what conditions do protests succeed? Do protest movements die?

This seminar will address these, and other questions related to the study of political protest. We will start this course analyzing the problem of collective action, and how different theories have explained the emergence of protest movements and participation. From there, we will examine different protest movements around the world to understand the power of non-violence, analyze how social media has changed protest participation, examine the differences between local and global protests, learn about inequalities in protest participation and its consequences for democracy, institutionalization, mobilization, success and repression.

The seminar will be very eclectic in the use of teaching materials and learning strategies. We will learn from political protests across the world, seminal and cutting-edge research on protest and social movements, journalistic pieces, documentaries, and from Micah White, co-founder of the Occupy Movement.

GOALS
- Students will become equipped with the analytical skills to understand the origins, growth, success and failures of protest movements today
- Students will gain knowledge on the scholarship and activists’ discussions on social movements and protest
REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Attendance is mandatory for all students. The course evaluation is as follows:

1. Class participation (10%)

All is about getting engaged! To make the most of this course bring in your questions, your critical views on protest movements, your skepticism or confidence on the impact protests have on social and political change.

The participation grade has two equally-important components:
- First, students must do all required readings to contribute to class discussions.
- Second, active involvement on the class activities.

Please note that only students who engage in class discussions on a regular basis will get a high grade on participation.

2. Reading response papers (15%)

Students must prepare 3 response papers (2 to 3 pages TNR 12, 1,5 spaced) discussing at least two of the papers assigned for a session. Response essays should summarize the article or chapters, and a) provide a critical assessment of the paper implications for the topic covered in class, or b) assess the article’ claims and empirical tests. Please, include one bullet point at the end of the paper with the question you would like to bring to the class discussion.

Responses will be submitted no later than the day before the class meets (at 9pm).

Late submissions: Response papers that are not submitted by the day before the class meets at 9pm will not be accepted. Do not ask for exceptional treatment (remember you can skip a few sessions from submitting a paper!!).

3. Documentaries’ response paper (15%)

To complement the readings, students will submit three 3-page response papers on the documentaries listed below. The paper has to summarize the documentary and discuss what lessons we can extract from the documentary to our class.

- **How to Start a Revolution**
  A conversation with Gene Sharp, founder of the Albert Einstein Institution, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the study of nonviolent action.
  Submission date: TBA

- **Knock Down the House**
  A film that follows four female Democrats who decided to run for Congress in the 2018 United States elections.
  Submission date: TBA
For the third documentary essay, you can choose among these:

- The Square (on the Egyptian Revolution)
- The hand that feeds (on the movement for fair wages of undocumented immigrants)
- Battle for Hong Kong (on Hong Kong 2019 Protests)
- She's Beautiful When She's Angry (on the feminist movement)
- How to Change the World (on Greenpeace)

 Submission date: TBA

4. Dataset and report (15%)

Identify a geographic area. Look up for information regarding major protests occurring in that area in the last year. Learn about the timeline of the protest, its roots, its goals, the protest’s mobilization power, the protester profile, repression, violence and the protest’s end. Produce a dataset, and a report summarizing your findings and reflecting on the similarities and differences across protest movements, and trends (15%).

 Submission date: TBA

Grading schema (7.5 points each):
- Protests’ coverage
- Soundness of the analysis

5. Reports’ presentations (15%)

Individual or group presentation —depending on the number of students enrolled in the course— to the class. You will share the findings of your research with the class. What are the commonalities or differences between protests in the area? Is there any common pattern? What makes some protests more successful than others?

 Submission date: TBA

Grading schema (3 points each):
- Clarity of exposition
- Internal coherence of the presentation
- Informative, but concise slides
- Soundness of the analysis
- Clear and elaborated responses in the Q&A

6. Final essay (25%)

Students will submit a paper (seven pages including references, TNR 12, 1,5 spaced) assessing a protest movement. For the purpose of this assignment you will be using one of the protests’ movements about which you learned for assignment 4. The goal of this paper is to apply what we have learned in class regarding goal definition, mobilization, strategies and tactics, institutionalization, framing, centralization, etc. to critically assess a protest movement.

 Submission date: TBA
Grading schema (5 points each):
- Description of the protest
- Clarity of exposition
- Internal coherence
- Soundness of the analysis
- Use of references

Late submission policy: Late submissions will be brought down one point for each day the paper is late. No extensions without Dean’s excuses.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All the work students prepare for this course must be their own. Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstance. I will use Turnitin to detect similarities with existing work. You can also use Turnitin before submitting your paper to improve your writing. You can revise the Yale Policy on Plagiarism and multiple submissions here: http://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/policies/definitions-plagiarism-cheating/

Please, use APSA-style citations and references for your written assignments. See here for details: https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/

IN-CLASS LAPTOPS

Research has shown that laptop multitasking hampers learning and course performance. Laptops do not only distract users, but also non-users. The use of laptops in class will be restricted to in-class activities. All cell phones must be turned off during class.

DISABILITIES

Students in need of adjustments or accommodations due to their documented disabilities should speak with me during the first week of class. All discussions on this topic will remain confidential.

INCLUSIVENESS STATEMENT

It is important to me that each and every one of you feel part of the class and make the most of it. To that end, I am fully committed to create an inclusive learning environment. If you feel that I am failing to achieve this goal, please let me know and I will remedy it. Students must also contribute to this inclusive learning environment. You must be civil and respectful of other views.

TEXTBOOK AND SUPPORTING READING MATERIALS

There is no recommended textbook for this class. All readings for the class will be made available through course reserve in canvas or the library reserves. Some of the readings include statistical analyses. I will provide a quick introduction to learn how to interpret them.

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1 See, for example this article in the New York Times.
RESEARCH RESOURCES
Kenya Flash, the Political Science librarian, has created a resource page for our class. See here: https://guides.library.yale.edu/protestmovement

If you need guidance on how to do a literature search for your assignments, you can email kenya.flash@yale.edu and make an appointment for office hours with her.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This session provides an overview of the course, its goals and the relevance of political protest today. We will devote some time to debate about why protest occurs, and the assumptions behind protests. The session surveys different definitions of social movements, and political protest, dissects the concept of success in protest, examines methods used to study protest at the individual and the aggregate level, methodological problems associated to the study of protest, ecological fallacies in the theorization of social disorders, and the challenge of identifying the causal effects of protesting.

Please, note you need to do the readings for this class before the first session!!

Required


In-class activity. Discussion.

Big group discussion. Can protest movements lead to political and social change? Read the articles below to inform your views on the issue.

Is there any point to protesting? by Nathan Heller
People are in the streets protesting Donald Trump. But when does protest actually work? by Erica Chenoweth
Why Street Protests Don't Work. How can so many demonstrations accomplish so little? by Moisés Naim
Yes, marches can make a difference. It depends on these three factors by Shom Mazumder


This session introduces students to the collective action problem in protest participation. Protesting requires cooperation and individuals’ engagement in collective action, but cooperation is a difficult endeavor. In this session, we will learn about the difficulties of
cooperation under uncertainty, material and non-material selective incentives behind protest participation, the role of leaders, followers and bystanders.

Required


Recommended


In-class activities:

1. Public goods cards game
2. Short video projection: How to start a movement by Derek Sivers.


We will devote this session to learn about different theoretical approaches to the study of protest that emphasize the relevance of relative deprivation, resource mobilization, political opportunities, framing, identities and emotions. These theories were originally conceived to explain the emergence and growth of protest movements. However, these theories have been also used to explain individual participation on protests. We will examine how empirical research has tested these theories at the individual level.

Required


Recommended


In-class activity: Small and Big group discussion. Analyzing how different theories explain the
origin and growth of social movements. The class will choose a protest movement (A day without immigrants, Black Lives Matter, Never again, the Separatist Movement in Catalonia...) and will analyze how the different theories explain the origin and growth of social movements. Before class meets, investigate the protest movement to contribute to the small and big class discussions. Use sources not listed in the syllabus to get informed about this movement and share them in the Canvas Discussion.


In this session, we will talk about the repertoires of protest and emerging forms of protest participation. We will also examine the strategic use of non-violence and will discuss why nonviolent protest is more effective than violent protest in authoritarian regimes. We will also reflect on the assessment of disruptive contestation in democratic vs. authoritarian regimes. Finally, this lesson will serve to understand what factors influence social movements’ “decisions” to use violent or nonviolent forms of protesting.

Required:

- Engler, Mark and Paul Engler. 2017. *This is an uprising. How Nonviolent revolt is shaping the Twenty-First Century.* New York: Nation Books. [Chapter 1]
- Listen to NPR interview to Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth. Steve Inskeep (NPR) talks to Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth about why non-violent resistance campaigns work better than armed rebellion. The interview features their 2014 work in *Foreign Affairs Drop Your Weapons, When and Why Civil Resistance Works.*

Recommended:


In-class activity: Movie forum on How to Start a Revolution. Read Hong Kong stares into the abyss amid growing violence. What are the lessons of the movie for Hong Kong protests?

Session 5. June 9. Conservative Social Movements

When we think about social movements, we mainly think about progressive movements trying to foster political change. This session studies far-right groups in America and Europe, their strategies and tactics to gain traction, and constrain progressive political and social change.
Required


Recommended


In class activity: We will be surveying far-right groups in Europe and will try to identify their goals, mobilization strategies and activities. A good place to start with this search is the Counter Extremism Project


We will study the relationship between off-line and on-line forms of protest, and its impact on political change with a focus on Egypt and Tunisia. Does social media play the same role today that it had at the beginning of the last decade?

Required


In-Class activity: Wael Ghonin TED talks 2011 and 2015.

Session 7. June 16. Social Media and Protest II

Is slacktivism hindering social and political change or propelling it? What does research tell us about the role social media plays in protest participation today? The articles assigned for this session will offer a particular perspective on this issue.

Required


In-class activity: Individual research and group discussion. The #MeToo Movement might be considered the first social “media” movement. Do some research on the movement, its origins and consequences? You can start here. What has the movement accomplished? What are the lessons we can learn from this movement?

Session 8. June 18. Global vs local protests

In this session, we focus on the environment to compare local and global protest movements. We will study the organization of local and global movements; its goals, the role of leaders, its tactics, and the outcomes of local and global protests in policy change. Do environmental protests mobilize environmentally deprived populations, or people with post-material (?) concerns? We will examine the coordination problem behind global protests, the role of leaders, the tactics, and the outcomes of local and global protests in policy change.

Required

- Interview to Greta Thunberg

In class activity. Big group discussion. Will global protests ever achieve change? Before class meets, investigate Extinction Rebellion to contribute to the discussion. Use sources not listed in the syllabus to get informed about this movement. You can start with this article about the backlash Extinction Rebellion received from citizens. We could learn about tactics and leaders too.

Session 9. June 23. Do movements die or do they just get transformed?

This session examines the evolution of social movements: we will discuss about prefigurative politics and the institutionalization logic, as exemplified of two anti-austerity movements: Occupy Wall Street and the Indignados movement. We will also examine theoretical approaches that explain why protest die.
Please note this is a heavy reading lesson!!

Required


In-class activity: Guest Speaker, Micah White, co-creator of Occupy Wall Street movement, and author of The End of Protest.

*Session 10. June 25. Presentations*